

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

LEAFLETS
of
POPULAR INFORMATION

ERIOGONUM GIGANTEUM

ST. CATHERINE'S LACE

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Prepared
by
RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN
of the
NATIVE PLANTS OF CALIFORNIA
Santa Ana Canyon
Orange County
California

ERIOGONUM GIGANTEUM
ST. CATHERINE'S LACE.

Polygonaceae

Buckwheat Family

Shrub 5-10 ft. high, usually broader than high, trunk 3-6 in. in diam. (rarely up to 12 in.) clothed with rough, shreddy, brown bark. Young branchlets gray-tomentose, but becoming glabrate and greenish or reddish in age. Leaves borne toward the ends of the branches, alternate, entire, wavy margined, ovate, mainly obtuse at tip and more or less truncate at base, the blade 2-4 in. long, 1-2 in. wide, petiole about 1 in. long. Young leaves densely white-tomentose when young, but later the upper surface becomes less hairy and is definitely green, while the lower surface turns gray and has conspicuous veins. Inflorescence borne well above the leaves, forming a compoundly branched cyme 1-3 ft. long and equally broad. Bracts mostly less than $\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, becoming brown as the flowers open. Involucres campanulate, $\frac{1}{8}$ in. high, the 5-6 teeth obscure, hairy, containing about 12 nearly sessile flowers. Calyx white-hairy without, $\frac{1}{8}$ in. across, the 6 segments in 2 series, the 3 outer broadly ovate, 1-nerved (this greenish), the 3 inner narrower and with a pink nerve. Petals lacking. Stamens 9, nearly twice as long as the sepals; filaments white, hairy at base, anthers pinkish. Ovary superior, 1-celled, bearing 3 short styles and developing into a brown achene (a 1-seeded indehiscent fruit) about $\frac{1}{8}$ in. long.

The genus Eriogonum (derived from 2 Greek words meaning hairy and knee in reference to the hairy joints of some species) consists of over 150 species from North America, of which nearly half are found in California. No region of the state, from the hottest deserts to the rocky alpine slopes, is without its quota of Wild-Buckwheats, as they are commonly called. Several kinds are valuable sources of excellent quality honey.

Eriogonum giganteum was described in 1885 by Sereno Watson of Harvard University who had been sent specimens collected on Santa Catalina Island the year before by Lyon and Nevin. The specific name was given because of the great size of the plants (in comparison with other species of the genus). The common name, St. Catherine's Lace, was given by the residents of the island and was indeed appropriate. The plants grow wild only on Santa Catalina and San Clemente Islands where they are conspicuous on the steep, rocky, dry slopes. Some large individuals have been reported with heights of 12 ft. and trunks a foot in diam. In 1897 Mrs. Brandegee, a California botanist, describ-

ed a narrow leaved race from San Clemente Island as variety formosum. Recently (1938) Prof. Mason of the University of California described a garden hybrid between E. giganteum and arborescens under the name of E. Blissianum, based upon material from the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden.

We have grown Eriogonum giganteum since 1930 when propagation material was obtained on Santa Catalina Island. It is comparatively easy to grow plants from seeds planted in beds or flats in the fall, winter or spring. The seedlings should be transplanted to pots or other containers when very small, since the plants early develop a long taproot, after which it is difficult to transplant the seedlings without excessive loss. They should also be set in their permanent places before getting the least bit pot-bound. For the last several years we have established thousands of plants by broadcasting the seeds in the late fall or winter. Plants grown in this way appear to be more vigorous, develop a better root system and appear to be longer lived than those grown in pots or cans. By either method the plants will flower the second season.

St. Catherine's Lace thrives in dry, coarse, well drained spots and needs little or no water after the first season. If watered at all after it is established this should be done in the late spring before the flowers are out and then the plants allowed to go partially dormant during the hot summer months. After the blooming period (about late July) the flowering branches should be removed as this improves the appearance of the plants and also prevents splitting of the lower branches during the fall and winter winds.

Our largest specimen of St. Catherine's Lace now stands over 8 ft. high, has a spread of over 12 ft. and a trunk nearly 5 in. in diam. It is a volunteer seedling near the Administration Building and is a spectacular sight when in full bloom.

Some other species of Eriogonum have more brilliantly colored flowers than E. giganteum, but none really rival it in the gracefulness and charm displayed by its huge compound cymes of whitish flowers which gradually turn to soft, delicate tans and browns as the seeds ripen. Carefully gathered flowering branches can be arranged to make exquisite bouquets which may be kept without water for many months and which will not drop their flowers unless disturbed.

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN
Of The Native Plants of California.
Established 1927
In Memory of John W. Bixby.

Mrs. Susanna Bixby Bryant, Founder and Managing Director.

PURPOSE: A scientific institution devoted to the growth and study of native plants of California for their botanical, horticultural and popular features.

ADMINISTRATION: The Garden Foundation was legally established in 1934 under which the properties and endowment were placed in the hands of a self-perpetuating board of 5 trustees as follows: Mr. Allen L. Chickering (chairman), Mrs. Susanna Bixby Bryant, Mr. Stuart O'Melveny, Mr. Irving M. Walker and Mr. Ernest A. Bryant, Jr.

SITE: Consists of about 200 acres of land with varied slopes, exposures and soil types, and elevations ranging from 500 to 1000 feet. Plantings have amounted to many thousands of plants each year and now represent over one-half of the kinds of trees and shrubs of the state as well as many of the finest perennials and annuals.

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING: Designed and built to house the Herbarium and Library for use by the Garden research department.

HERBARIUM: Over 22,000 pressed plant specimens and many supplementary collections of cones, seeds and wood samples.

LIBRARY: Approximately 2,000 botanical books and many periodicals, maps, photographs, etc.

ASSEMBLY HALL: Flower shows and lectures on visitors' days.

EXPLORATION: Field work in California occupies a place of major importance and the staff devotes considerable time each year to making field notes, herbarium collections and obtaining propagation materials in all parts of the state.

NURSERY: For propagating the materials collected.

VISITING DAYS: Fridays (10 A.M. to 4 P.M.) during April, May and June by card only, obtainable by forwarding a self-addressed stamped envelope, stating date preferred, to:

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